

Tyler Junior College Jazz Program

The TJC Jazz Program has provided performance opportunities for interested students for more than 30 years and has established itself as one of the finest junior college jazz programs in the state of Texas. In the past three years, the band program at TJC has exploded in numbers, and has allowed for a great deal of growth in the Jazz Program. In 2004 an additional Jazz Ensemble was added to the schedule to accommodate the growing interest in the jazz program. In 2005 a small jazz combo was created to allow for more community outreach and civic performances.

The TJC Jazz Ensembles and Jazz Combo enjoy a full slate of performances each semester, including a wide variety of campus and community events. Each year the TJC Jazz Program hosts “Moonlight Serenade”, an annual dinner and dance, to reunite young students and the community with the jazz music of the World War eras. Every spring, the TJC Jazz Ensembles host the Tyler Junior College Jazz Festival. This event provides an opportunity for East Texas middle and high school students to perform with and be critiqued by guest artists who are among the top jazz artists in the country. This March, the TJC Jazz Festival will play host to Vince DiMartino, a renowned trumpet artist and former lead and solo trumpet with the Lionel Hampton Band, the Chuck Mangione Band and the Clark Terry Band.

The TJC Jazz Ensembles have performed at many jazz festivals hosted throughout Texas and Louisiana, receiving top ratings at such festivals as the McNeese State University Jazz Festival and the Temple Jazz Festival. This past spring the TJC Jazz Ensemble I, Jazz Ensemble II and the Jazz Combo all received unanimous superior ratings and four individuals were presented with outstanding soloists awards at the Northwestern State University Jazz Festival in Natchitoches, Louisiana.

The TJC Jazz Ensembles also travel extensively. In 2003, the TJC Jazz Ensemble traveled to Hawaii to perform for troops awaiting deployment to Afghanistan and Iraq, with performances at Scofield Army Base and Pearl Harbor Naval Base. In 2005, the TJC Jazz Ensemble traveled to Ramstein Air Base in Germany to perform for soldiers and their families stationed abroad.

From rags to swing, latin to rock, funk to fusion, the TJC Jazz Ensembles cover a wide variety of music for any occasion. The Tyler Junior College Jazz Ensembles are currently under the direction of Heather Mensch, Assistant Band Director and Instructor of Jazz Studies.